

March 28, 1952

' Singin' in the Rain,' Starring Gene Kelly, Ushers In Spring at the Music Hall; A Psychologist's Life in Prison, 'My Six Convicts,' With Mitchell, at Astor

By **BOSLEY CROWTHER**

Spring came with a fresh and cheerful splatter to the Music Hall yesterday with the arrival of Metro's new musical, "Singin' in the Rain," along with the Glory-of-Easter pageant and a vernal revue on the stage. Compounded generously of music, dance, color, spectacle and a riotous abundance of Gene Kelly, Jean Hagen and Donald O'Connor on the screen, all elements in this rainbow program are carefully contrived and guaranteed to lift the dolors of winter and put you in a buttercup mood.

Take as a token of the picture its title, "Singin' in the Rain," which has no more to do with its story than it has to do with performing dogs. Of all things, this song-and-dance contrivance is an impudent, offhand comedy about the outlandish making of movies back in the sheik-and-flapper days when they were bridging- the perilous chasm from silent to talking films. And its plot, if that's what you'd call it, concerns a silent film star who is linked with a slut-voiced leading lady while wooing a thrushy new young thing.

If anyone can tell us what all of the nonsense that goes on has to do with the title of the picture, we will buy him a new spring hat. But that doesn't make any difference, for the nonsense is generally good and at times it reaches the level of first-class satiric burlesque. Adolph Green and Betty Comden may have tossed off the script with their left hands, but occasionally they come through with powerful and hilarious round-house rights.

Take, for instance, the scene in which Miss Hagen as the guttersnipe silent queen is making her first acquaintance with the hidden microphone. No funnier lampoon of film-making has yet swum within our ken than this brief but side-splitting revelation of the battle with the machine. And some of the musical numbers that kid the old musical clichés, such as fashion parades and pin-wheel chorus groups, are as mischievous as they come.

Also we'll say for the authors—and for Mr. Kelly and Stanley Donen, who directed the show: they had the courage to kid Louella Parsons with a devastating take-off by Madge Blake. Under the protocol of Hollywood, this is lese majesty!

However, the pattern of the picture is such that a lot of room is made for singing and dancing in

the liveliest Kelly-cum-all style. And it is in these elegant phases that the spirit is lightest and most gay. Mr. Kelly who plays the silent film star up from burlesque and vaudeville, runs away, of course, with the dancing—and, as a matter of fact, with most of the songs.

His dance and duet with Debbie Reynolds to "You Were Meant For Me" is a sweet lump of Technicolored sugar, and his galloping through "Broadway Ballet" is a lot of eye-filling acrobatics against a mammoth production splurge. This is a combination of the oldies, "Broadway Rhythm" and "Broadway Melody," with Cyd Charisse stepping out of nowhere to do a lovely dream dance with Mr. K. But by far his most captivating number is done to the title song—a beautifully soggy tap dance performed in the splashing rain.

Donald O'Connor, as Mr. Kelly's sidekick, also has a jolly romp in a battering and bruising slapstick number entitled "Make Me Laugh" and joins with the star in making "Moses" a lively thing. Miss Reynolds sings "Would You" nicely, Miss Hagen is an excellent farceuse and Millard Mitchell and Douglas Fowley are good in producer and director roles.

It is notable that most of the old music is equipped with lyrics by Arthur Freed, who is now a big Metro producer and happened—how did you guess it?—to have produced this film. Maybe that's why the title is "Singin' in the Rain."

In addition to the Glory-of-Easter pageant the stage show at the Music Hall includes Patricia Drylie, ballerina; the Andrea Dancers, Edward Ruhl, Bela Kremo, the Corps de Ballet, Glee Club, and Rockettes.

SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, screen play and story by Adolph Green and Betty Comden; directed by Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen; produced by Arthur Freed. At the Radio City Music Hall.

Don Lockwood Gene Kelly

Cosmo Brown Donald O'Connor

Kathy Selden Debbie Reynolds

Lina Lamont Jean Hagen

R. F. Simpson Millard Mitchell

Guest Artist Cyd Charisse

Zelda Zanders Rita Moreno

Roscoe Dexter Douglas Fowley

Dora Bailey Madge Blake

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